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March 6, 2000

Department of the Army  
Walla Walla District, Corps of Engineers  
Attn: Lower Snake River Study  
201 North Third Avenue  
Walla Walla, WA 99362-1876

**RE: Draft Lower Snake River Juvenile Salmon Migration Feasibility Report and  
Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)**

On behalf of the Izaak Walton League of America and our 50,000 members and supporters nationwide, I am writing to express the League's support for Alternative #4, the dam breaching alternative. As a conservation organization, we are deeply concerned about the plight of wild Snake River salmon and steelhead, which have declined precipitously since the last of the four federal dams was constructed on the lower Snake River. Obviously, since truck and barge bypass of Snake River salmon and steelhead has not worked, maintaining the status quo (Alternative #1) is unacceptable. Doing more of the same on a simply larger scale (Alternatives # 2 and #3) is both economically and biologically unsound, as well.

The scientific analysis in the DEIS clearly indicates that dam breaching is the alternative with by far the best likelihood of recovering imperiled Snake River salmon and steelhead. In addition to the scientific analysis by the National Marine Fisheries Service contained in the DEIS, there is overwhelming scientific consensus elsewhere that restoring natural river conditions is essential to recovering wild Snake River salmon and steelhead. The fish and wildlife agencies for Idaho, Washington and Oregon, along with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority, and scores of independent and academic scientists, all agree that dam breaching is by far the best chance for saving the fish. Although a holistic approach that meaningfully addresses habitat, hatcheries and harvest is also necessary, restoring the lower Snake to a free flowing river is an absolutely indispensable component of any successful recovery strategy.

**National Office:**

707 Conservation Lane Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878-2983  
Phone: (301) 548-0150 Fax: (301) 548-0146  
E-mail: [general@iwl.org](mailto:general@iwl.org) <http://www.iwl.org>



**Midwest Office:**

1619 Dayton Avenue, Suite 202 St. Paul, Minnesota 55104-6206  
Phone: (651) 649-1446  
Fax: (651) 649-1494

The economic impact analysis in the DEIS overstates the costs associated with dam breaching and underestimates the benefits of a free-flowing river, such as indirect economic benefits from increased sport fishing, river recreation and tourism from nonresidents. In addition, the cost analysis is fundamentally flawed by not fully incorporating the costs of non-breaching alternatives, including fish bypass and transportation costs, Clean Water Act compliance measures, flow augmentation from the upper Snake River in southern Idaho, and potential tribal treaty abrogation costs. It should be emphasized that only 140 river miles would become unnavigable under the dam breaching alternative. Grain and other commodities could be transported by truck and rail from Lewiston and still can be shipped by barge from Pasco, Wash., located near the confluence of the Snake and Columbia Rivers.

In closing, the League again urges the Corps of Engineers to select Alternative #4 as the Preferred Alternative in the Final EIS. We owe it to ourselves and to future generations to make the right choices today, regardless of the difficulty, to ensure that these magnificent fish survive and recover to the point of once again being viable, self-sustaining resource.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ron Scott", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ron Scott

Senior Conservation Associate